

We Claim:

54B A17
1. A control unit in electrical communication with one or more computers for use in performing electronic trading operations, the one or more computers communicating with at least one visual display for displaying to an operator of the control unit trading-related information, comprising:

003021 "FREE" 00
trading control buttons allowing the operator to perform trading operations without the need for the need for sliding the control unit over a surface and permitting the operator to maintain substantially constant visual contact with the at least one visual display, substantially without the need for visually focusing on the control unit during the performance of trading operations; and

customizable software enabling the controller to interface with a variety of proprietary trading applications.

2. The control unit of Claim 1, wherein the control unit includes a cursor control mechanism for allowing the operator to position a cursor within the at least one visual display.

3. The control unit of Claim 1, wherein the trading control buttons have different shapes, sizes or textures to provide the operator with tactile feedback sufficient to allow the operator

to distinguish between the trading control buttons without visually focusing on the buttons.

4. The control unit of Claim 1, wherein the trading control buttons emit different audible signals to allow the operator to distinguish between the trading control buttons without visually contacting on the buttons.

5. The control unit of Claim 1, wherein the control unit includes a visual display.

6. The control unit of Claim 5, wherein the visual display comprises an LED screen showing trading-related information.

7. The control unit of Claim 1, further comprising two or more visual displays in electrical communication with the one or more computers, wherein the control unit includes a transfer mechanism allowing the operator to shift cursor control between the two or more visual displays.

8. The control unit of Claim 1, wherein the control unit includes a button allowing the

vertical scrolling of information on a visual display.

9. The control unit of Claim 1, wherein the control unit includes a button which, when depressed, changes the function of other buttons located on the control unit.

10. The control unit of Claim 1, wherein the control unit employs software configured to mimic mouse/keyboard input.

11. The control unit of Claim 10, wherein a virtual plate of glass is placed over the user interface for a proprietary application.

12. The control unit of Claim 1, wherein the control unit is sized to permit it to be handheld during the performance of trading operations.

13. A method for using a control unit in electrical communication with one or more computers for performing electronic trading operations, the one or more computers communicating with at least one visual display for displaying to an operator of the control unit trading-related

performing trading operations using trading control buttons located on the control unit without the need for sliding the control unit over a surface and permitting the operator to maintain substantially constant visual contact with the at least one visual display, substantially without the need for visually focusing on the control unit during the performance of trading operations.

14. The method of Claim 13, wherein trading operations are performed while maintaining the control unit within a hand-held position.